

LETTERS FROM JALIL MUNTAQIM

REFLECTIONS FROM INSIDE PRISON WALLS ON RESISTANCE TO POLICE TERROR



Jalil Muntaqim became affiliated with the Black Panther Party at age 18. Less than 2 months before his 20th birthday he was captured with the late Albert Nuh Washington in a midnight shootout with San Francisco police.

He was subsequently charged with a host of revolutionary activities including the assassination of two police officers in New York City. It is for this that he is currently serving a 25 years to life sentence in New York State.

His case is known as the New York 3 case as his co-defendants include Albert Nuh Wahington and Herman Bell, all three have maintained their innocence.

He was also implicated in the San Francisco 8 case, and pled guilty to a lesser offense.

What follows is Hands Up Don't Shoot! , When Police Die, and A Mothers Loss. These are three pieces by Jalil Muntaqim , that he wrote during the height of the constant resistance to police terrorism that was sweeping across North America that began in the latter half of 2014.

**Write to Jalil:
Anthony J. Bottom #77A4283
Attica C.F.
P.O. Box 149
Attica, NY 14011-0149**



HANDS UP! DONT SHOOT!

Contrary to the refrain from the tragic Ferguson, Mo., shooting of Michael Brown, we know that keeping your hands up does not mean you will not be shot. Assata Shakur had her hands up when she was shot on the New Jersey turnpike by a State Trooper, Oscar Grant was laying face down on a subway platform when he was shot in the back by a Bay Area Transit cop, Sean Bell was executed in a hail of bullets by a half dozen N.Y. city cops while sitting in a car, and Trayvon Martin fought to defend himself when he was murdered by a wanna-be cop just yards from his home. Obviously, I find this plea for mercy sorely insufficient, in fact, indefensible when a trained killer has a weapon pointed at you under the guise of Blue authority. Needless to say, this passive posture generally supports the inferior and superior paradigm, creating a social environment in which Black lives do not matter. Brooke Reynolds, in an essay titled "Policing Race," informed:

"This "order" was created and protected by US law. From slavery to today's militarized ghettos, it is clear that racial violence has almost always occurred explicitly or implicitly in cooperation with the law. William and Murphy trace the relationship between the law and social order: "The fact that the legal order not only countenanced but sustained slavery, segregation, and discrimination for most of our nation's history and the fact that the police were bound to uphold that order sets patterns for police behavior and attitudes toward minority communities that has persisted until the present day." (Parenti). In terms of the relationship to the police themselves, "Government-sponsored racial discrimination and segregation have deeply affected the organizing ethos and practices of US policing." (Parenti)—thus, it becomes clear that "... relationship between police violence and social institution of policing is structural, rather than incidental or contingent." (Martinot, Sexton). Wielding an arsenal of moralist rhetoric and trained over hundreds of years of historical

practice, the police work in conjunction with white society and its government to keep white lawlessness understood as nothing other than “public order,” enforcing “the law of white supremacist attack” with determination and fervor.”

In response to this reality, Robert Williams wrote the book “Negroes With Guns,” reflecting on the institutionalization of State violence and the inherent human rights of Black people to defend themselves, that was also practiced by the Deacons for Defense opposing Klu Klux Klan violence.

Reynolds continues:

“By confronting the perpetration of police racial violence with the maintenance of social order, it is rendered unidentifiable, ignorable, and inarticulable. Having been so deeply written into our very conception of social organization and policing, police brutality and racism becomes invisible to white society (who also has an investment in denying the reality of racial violence). Shocked by stories of police violence and unmoved by the dehumanization of racial profiling, white people simultaneously reveal their ignorance of and investment in the violent inherent in the protection of white supremacy.”

Furthermore, Reynolds states:

“The ignorability and inarticulability of racist police violence to white society is directly related to its historical and current impunity. Authorized by the government and white society as a whole, the police are given the freedoms necessary in order to guarantee the stability of white supremacy and to continue constructing racialized identities. Within this system, injustices done to people of color are not classified as injustices, if they are recognized at all. Police murders, abuses, and terrorization of people of color, no matter how gratuitous, are more often than not met with legal indifference, public support, and are virtually bereft of consequences. Martinot notes the relationship between modern-day police impunity, slave patrols, and white supremacist law:

“Both the police and the impunity of slave masters belong to the same paradigm of dual systems of law, sanctioned by the law, in producing the subjection of people of color. What contemporary juridical procedure has done, by valorizing police impunity, is regenerate the doubled system of law of the slave system... Thus, both manifest the component elements

white racialized identity paranoia..., violence..., and white solidarity..." (Martinot).

"The racist police violence which pervades the landscape of US society today is not incidental, nor [is it] the work of 'rogue cops,' [It is] an essential part of the larger campaign of social re-racialization" (Martinot). Historically rooted in a very real desire to subjugate and control people of color in America, and operating in a way which inscribes and deepens whiteness as an identity and a value, today's police forces operate along the same paradigm as their predecessors." (Reynolds)

These lengthy quotes from Reynolds "Policing Race" establish the lens in which we are to view the recent rash of police killings of unarmed Black people. It is extremely important that conversations and national debate about the relationship between the police and the Black community is not the same as the relationship between the police and the white community. The historical ramifications of this dynamic relationship today are subject to the reality of the racist culture in law enforcement. Law enforcement modus operandi, for all intents and purposes, are based on outside armed forces, albeit white people, patrolling communities of color, with all of its inherent racial implications.

Over forty years ago, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense raised the very same issues, establishing their patrols to ensure police officers conducted their business in accord with the law. For their actions and concerns for the welfare of the Black community, the BPP became the number one target for extermination by law enforcement across the country. The primary reason is because the BPP did not believe or practice passive resistance, they were not in the streets chanting "Hands Up Don't Shoot." Such passive pleas would be considered a misguided belief protesters would be safe challenging a system of armed forces with innate disdain for the well being of Black people's lives. Rather, such modus operandi parallels the racial attitudes of the slave patrols out of which the police system evolved. (See, Hadden, Sally E., *Slave Patrols*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) (Reynolds, pg. 3-8).

The task of young people today is to increase pressure and define the national debate on the relationship between the Black community and police. De-Militarization and De-Centralization must become the primary demand. The call for community control of the police was what the BPP fought to achieve, and that objective is what needs to be demanded now.

The police need to live in the community, not come from outside the community. There must be more diversity in the command and structure of the police, reflecting the composition of the community they patrol.

It is time to reverse the chant 'No Justice No Peace' to "No Peace Without Justice," it is time to ensure Black lives matter as much as white lives, and that all people's lives are as sacred as police lives.

The First Line of Defense IS power to the People!

Remember: We Are Our Own Liberators

Jalil Muntaqim Attica December 5th, 2014



WHEN POLICE DIE



Once again, the nation is compelled to mourn the death of police officers. Rightly so, if such mourning changes the dynamics of the relationship between a para-militarized police and the communities in which they patrol. By no sense of the imagination should anyone be cavalier about the killing of a police officer, no more than they should be when a police officer wrongly kills a civilian, especially an unarmed civilian. But that is the point. When the valorization of the life of a police officer is raised to the level of hero-worshipping, what does that do to the psyche of the general population in respect to their own lives? Thus, the PBA's demagoguery (presumably to enhance future contract negotiations) and self-righteous condemnation must be viewed in light of how it ultimately serves to improve police-community relationships.

In my previous blog, "Hands Up—Don't Shoot," I ended by stating, "...it is time to ensure Black lives matter as much as white lives, and that all people's lives are as sacred as police lives." So, that leads to the question, how is that possible when police lives are considered far more valuable than anyone else's; they are more valued than a sanitation worker's, a postal worker's, the bus and taxi driver's, all of whom serve the community.

Granted, police officers, like firemen, at times put their lives on the line to safeguard the lives of others. It is terrible that in our highly developed technological society, our humanity has yet to reach a point in which the police have not become obsolete. However, I am of the opinion that all

of our humanity is challenged by the historical dynamic of racism and capitalism (exploitation and profiteering). As was learned from OWS, 1% of the population controls and owns 99% of the country's wealth. Unfortunately, more often than not, the police are used as tools of the capitalist class to protect financial interests over human interests. This is especially disconcerting as it pertains to the racialized disenfranchised and poor, such as racial profiling, In this regard, police violence represents the interests of the State. As I was once told, the police are the first line of defense for the maintenance of state power. If this is true, then it is extremely important the community-at-large recognizes how their lives are only as important as the state permits, for as long as they are exploitable/profitable.

Obviously, the dichotomy between the institution of police and society needs to be investigated and reevaluated, especially, when one is armed (militarized) and the other, for the most part, unarmed and vulnerable. The public perception and discourse imposed by corporate media shapes our collective thinking on the legitimacy of violence; state violence is legitimate, and any violence not sanctioned by the state is illegitimate. We then consciously accept the inevitability of the state, and thus the virtue of its violence.

Hence, community violence in inner cities is not sanctioned by the state, and therefore, it must be policed. Generally, we agree with this policing, when it saves lives and establishes social order. However, there is a causation for inner-city violence that is not readily considered for problem-solving, only managed by policing. Forty years ago, the Black Panther Party sought to challenge the causation of inner-city violence. The BPP attempted to rid the community of drug dealing, gang violence, and police brutality and murder, creating free breakfast programs, free community health clinics, supporting tenants' rights, etc. In response, the BPP was confronted with the full force of state violence, essentially destroying a movement with the potential of de-criminalizing the community, forging a revolutionary future. Lest we forget, permit me to remind us all, the death of a movement for liberation serves to keep in place the status quo of state violence in all of its forms.

Again, we must loathe all those who fail to recognize the sanctity of life. Therefore, it is extremely necessary to reject corporate media efforts to confuse the valorization of police above and beyond deaths of unarmed civilians killed by police. The noble protest against police violence must not be undermined or in any way disputed; the communities' grievances are

real and must be resolved with justice. We cannot afford to continue to preserve the dichotomy that lends to inferior to superior social paradigm in class and race relationships, and we certainly should not seek to maintain socio-economic disparity that lends to inequitable distribution of wealth.

The De-Militarization and De-Centralization of police is the primary objective that will serve to ensure the safety of the community. The demand for community control of the police strengthens the capacity of the community to police themselves, ridding the community of outside armed and potentially racist forces occupying the community.

In this regard, Martin L. King, Jr. raised the following:

“The question is not whether we will be extremists but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice, or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?”

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Fist Up Fight Back!

Remember: We Are Our own Liberators!

Jalil A. Muntaqim Attica December 22nd, 2014



A MOTHER'S LOSS

(FOR THE MOTHERS WHO LOST A CHILD FROM AN UNJUSTIFIED POLICE SHOOTING)



To lose a child under any circumstances is heart-wrenching for any parent. This is especially true when it is done by a representative of government. When the police kill, particularly a child, more specifically a man-child of color, it raises many questions about justification. As the rash of such police killings has created a national debate, it is important to recognize law enforcement in America has evolved into a militarized institution. Like many American institutions, it has been awarded with various forms of immunity, a type of exceptionalism. The contradictory dichotomy between becoming a hero or villain is based on the intent of the police officer who takes a civilian life, and how the law interprets that intent. The problem is that, when a person takes and passes the civil service exam and is sworn in as law enforcement personnel, they are granted the presumption of immunity. Yet the philosophy endemic and common to all law enforcement agencies is that they are guardians of a social order, as defined by law. Impressed upon this philosophy is the evolving of an ideology and a culture that reinforces an ideal, almost a belief system. Such a belief system creates a socio-political environment of a "them" and "us" paradigm, setting them apart and above the civilian population. Here is where the problem begins, which is especially significant when the horrific history of race is added to this evolving institution-

alized culture. Just as all police officers are not villains or heroes, the culture of the Blue-line makes it difficult to distinguish them apart, especially when they consistently rally around each other whether right or wrong. Within a known racially biased judicial system, they in essence protect the ideal of their immunity and the sanctity of their institutionalized culture.

It is with this understanding that a Mother must know when they lose a child to a police shooting, it is more than the individual cop they have to confront, it is the culture and institution that they represent. In this regard, while it is not necessary here to offer insight into the well-documented historical relationships between the system of slavery and the development of the police system, I must quote from Steve Martinot, "White Identity, Constitutionality, and its Double Legal System," where he recounts:

"Both the police and the impunity of slave masters belong to the same paradigm of dual system of law, sanctioned by the law, in producing the subjection of people of color. What contemporary juridical procedure has done, by valorizing police impunity, is to regenerate the double system of law of the slave system ... Thus, both manifest the component elements of white racial identity: paranoia ... violence ..., and white solidarity ..."

Hence, the reality of the situation is our community is not confronting individual cops or police agencies, but a historical cultural dynamic that has been institutionalized, not unlike the prison industrial complex and the school to prison pipeline as trinity of repression. It is apparent that these oppressive conditions are not circumstantial, it is policy driven and codified in law. For example, the well-known disparity in sentencing for crack possession compared to cocaine possession, or the number of Black folks stopped and arrested for marijuana possession compared to white folks being stopped and arrested. As a recent Times/CBS poll discovered, 45 percent of Black people, compared to 7 percent of white people, believed they had experienced a specific instance of police discrimination because of their race. Such is the case that 31 percent of white folks recognize police are more likely to use deadly force in Black neighborhoods than in white neighborhoods. If there is to be a remedy to this national problem, it is essential that Mothers of children lost to unjustified police shootings create a national database to identify the extent of the problem. To ensure a national dialogue on this problem demands congressional hearings on how best to De-Centralize and De-Militarize police forces across the country.

In this way, this struggle has the potential to demystify the invincibility of the police culture of impunity and immunity. Obviously, this debate needs to strengthen the argument the police are to represent the interests of people above the profits of the capitalist system. Essentially, Mothers who have lost children to police killings and the community must take a position that law enforcement is not above the law. Secondly, passing a civil service exam does not exempt law enforcement personnel from prosecution for the unjustified killing of innocent civilians. Since the culture of law enforcement supports the impression they are above the law, people must argue that legislation be passed that Community Review Boards have investigative and subpoena power, and are capable of demanding the prosecution and/or firing of police officers who have been found to violate people's civil and human rights. In this way, the community, especially Mothers of lost children, will be able to take control of the narrative in defining the relationship between the community and law enforcement. This may seem extreme; however, Martin Luther King, Jr. is reported to have instructed:

“The question is not whether we will be extremists but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice, or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?”

I believe all will agree there is nothing more extreme than the unjustified killing by police of Black children and men.

I am sorry for all the losses of these children, and Black boys, based on the failure of the Black Panther Party to pass on to the next generation lessons from the Cointelpro onslaught on the BPP. It is extremely unfortunate that such an important institution (police force) embedded in our community maintains a culture that seemingly epitomizes a “them” and “us” dysfunctional relationship. Obviously, community policing, in which police officers live and work in the community, would be best to engender a better relationship with law enforcement. But because of all that has been expressed above, the potential for that to happen is a far-fetched ideal. However, the fight for community policing empowers the community to take control of crime and punishment in the community. We can only hope that by virtue of Mothers' losses and the struggle to remedy such tragedy, we will win a more improved and appreciated relationship by lessening dependence on the police, and not cultivate negatively perceived belief in the police as an occupying force to keep the natives in control.

I would like to close by making one other observation. There is a need for the inhabitants of our community to take control of the community to lessen the need for police patrols. Street violence and drug dealing that puts everyone's lives in jeopardy, including cops, is the responsibility of the community. This is a collective failure, despite all of the political and socio-economic policies and decision-making that reinforce impoverishment, joblessness, homelessness and hopelessness ... crime in the community is a principle enemy. Collectively, we must confront Black on Black crime to preserve the future of our youth. This means that our youth must be recruited and trained to become community activists in the fight opposing political policies that disenfranchise and impoverish the community. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense held that criminal activity in the community was reactionary, and potentially counter-revolutionary. We have lost several generations since the Cointelpro destruction of the Black Panther Party to prison and the grave as a result of police repression. We must make every effort as part of challenging the current wave of police killings to eliminate the need for police entrenchment in the community. This requires the community's responsibility to end Black on Black crime.

This is the hard discussion that must be held as part of the national debate to eliminate these police killings, further eliminating the need for the overwhelming police presence in the community. A Mother's loss of a child to police or street violence makes this demand on all of us, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. instructed:

“Every step toward this goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

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Jalil A. Muntaqim Attica January 5th, 2015



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